

SIREN SONG

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

GENERAL CARGO
SIP! SWALLOW!
THE 'AYES' HAVE IT
MILD AND BITTER
WHAT A WORD!
HOLY DEADLOCK
THE WATER GIPSIES
UNCOMMON LAW
MISLEADING CASES IN THE COMMON LAW
MORE MISLEADING CASES
STILL MORE MISLEADING CASES
MR. PEWTER
'NO BOATS ON THE RIVER'
HONEYBUBBLE & CO.
THE SECRET BATTLE
THE HOUSE BY THE RIVER
THE OLD FLAME
TANTIVY TOWERS
DERBY DAY
HELEN
THE BOMBER GIPSY, AND OTHER POEMS
THE WHEREFORE AND THE WHY
'TINKER, TAILOR . . .'
WISDOM FOR THE WISE

SIREN SONG

by

A. P. HERBERT



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INTRODUCTION, FOREWORD, PREFACE, APOLOGY, ETC.

I HAVE never pretended to be a 'serious' poet; and this little bundle of things may make small appeal to Apollo. But it may be of some assistance to Mars when he compiles his annual report. All these verses (if I may presume so far) were written in the near expectation of the presence of war—from the months before Munich to the last (or last-but-one) day-before-the-invasion. Many were composed afloat, after a Friday midnight, during a too-prolonged Red warning, and telephoned to London from a pub passage on Saturday morning, in time for the Sunday paper. So one is not surprised, on looking through them, to find some things that one might have said differently with more leisure and information, and some topics, most important at the time, which are already almost forgotten. But, whatever the quality of the views or the verse, many of these works did say, in compact form, something that was in the minds of many that morning; so that, assembled in strict chronological order, they may serve at least as a kind of versical reminder of two very strange years. Far better, no doubt, if one of the young and serious poets had presented such a record: but then, where are they? So here, failing their aid, is the poor sort of song the sirens seemed to sing.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

ALL THESE verses appeared in *Punch*, the *Sunday Graphic*, or *Daily Sketch*, to whose proprietors I offer the customary thanks.

A. P. H.

CONTENTS

| | <i>page</i> |
|--|-------------|
| FOREIGN AFFAIRS | I |
| THE ROARER | 3 |
| SPRING, 1939 | 5 |
| LIGHTSHIPS | 9 |
| THE BOWLINE | II |
| ODE ON THE SCHEDULE OF RESERVED OCCUPATIONS | 14 |
| 'AUTOMATIC' | 17 |
| 'NO QUARREL' | 20 |
| A.H. | 21 |
| WHERE IS YOUNG LANCE . . .? | 23 |
| S. OR S? | 25 |
| BALLAD FOR BRITONS | 27 |
| HOLY RUSSIA | 30 |
| FOUR O'CLOCK | 31 |
| 'OUR MEMBER' | 33 |
| BLITZKRIEG | 37 |
| FED-UP | 38 |
| CROCUS TIME | 39 |
| ACCORDING TO PRITT | 41 |
| SPRING, 1940 | 42 |
| VON SPEE | 43 |
| TOUGH GUY | 44 |
| THE CORKSCREW | 45 |
| BAKU; OR, THE MAP-GAME | 46 |

| | |
|----------------------------|----------------|
| THE WINSTON TOUCH | <i>page</i> 48 |
| ‘NEUTRALITY’ | 49 |
| HITLER’S BIRTHDAY | 50 |
| THE DEVIL TO PAY | 51 |
| SONG FOR CIVILIANS | 52 |
| RUMOURS | 53 |
| ALL THE OLD PLACES | 54 |
| CIVIL DEFENCE | 55 |
| PAPER | 56 |
| ‘PHONEY’ | 58 |
| SONG FOR THE GERMAN PEOPLE | 59 |
| SIREN TIME | 60 |
| WOPSHIPS | 61 |
| TOP WOP | 62 |
| ‘VENI, VIDI, VICHY’ | 64 |
| THESE ARE THE BOYS | 65 |
| ‘MORALE’ | 66 |
| FRANCE | 67 |
| DOMESTIC HOLLOW-WARE, ETC. | 68 |
| ROARING JOE | 71 |
| ‘NO ISLANDS’ | 72 |
| MARCH OF THE FREE | 73 |

SIREN SONG

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

I'M A LITTLE bit tired of the Japs,
I am weary of wooing the Wops;
They engage in superfluous scraps,
And I shall be glad when it stops

Then, speaking of Foreign Affairs,
I'm a teeny bit tired of the Huns;
They behave like a nation of bears,
And I have to keep throwing them buns.

Their blood is delightfully pure,
But I find them a bit of a bore;
They are Aryan stock, I am sure,
But I don't want to hear any more.

Don't think that I'm leaving the League,
Don't think I'm an insular sap;
It's just that I suffer fatigue
If you speak of a Jop or a Wap.

And I really don't care if the Hop
Is a Nord or a Nube or a Dane:
Whatever he is, it's a flop,
And it mustn't be mentioned again.

I know there is much to be done,
I ache for the Chink and the Czech;
But as for the Hop and the Wun,
They give me a pain in the neck.

I dote on the Croat and the Dutch,
I long to be one with the Lapps;
But I *have* had a little too much
Of the Wups and the Jons and th

Indeed I should probably smile
If the Jups and the Hons and the Waps
Were marooned on a large desert isle
And the island were then to collapse.

As the Jops and the Hups and the Wans
Were discreetly engulfed by the sea,
No doubt it would worry the fans
But there'd not be a whimper from me.

August 24, 1938

THE ROARER

(*Well, why not another patriotic song?*)

OUR ROARER is a simple soul, his heart is always bleeding;
He's kind to his old mother, he is fond of flowers and reading;
But he has cowed the Continent from Russia to the Riff
By roaring into microphones and boring people stiff.

*Oh, rally round the Roarer!
Our Roarer beats the band;
We have a ruder Roarer
Than any other land!
He'll roar and rant and rage
Like something in a cage;
He rages, roars and rants,
And no one kicks his pants.
The world may sigh and stop its ear,
But everybody has to hear,
And it's so very boring
That all the frantic nations say,
'Oh, let the Roarer have his way
And stop the Roarer roaring.'*

By this original technique our Roarer licked the League; the nations are defeated not by force but sheer fatigue. Brude Wellingtons and Bonapartes went forth with sabres drawn; our Roarer stayed at home and flattened Europe with a yawn.

*Oh, rally round the Roarer!
Our Roarer beats the band.
We have a bigger borer
Than any other land.*

*The sacred foam that drips
From those prophetic lips
Is heard in every home
From Runnymede to Rome;
For this old Caxton spent his days,
For this Marconi tamed the rays,
And television's dawning
That every thought our Roarer thinks
Should be conveyed to Czechs and Chinks
And cause a cosmic yawning.*

*Our Roarer's moods are many and sometimes, which is odd,
He has depressing moments when he is not sure he's God.
But this fantastic diffidence is conquered very soon
When he marches to the microphone and bellows at the
moon.*

*Oh, rally round the Roarer!
Our Roarer beats the band;
We have a better borer
Than any other land.
Mankind from North to South
Puts its hand before its mouth;
If there's wireless in the stars
They are yawning up in Mars:
The signal flashes from the sun:
'Here's Public Nuisance Number One',
And clouds at once obscure it;
While all the frantic nations say,
'Stop roaring—you shall have your way;
We simply can't endure it'.*

September 28, 1938

SPRING, 1939

THE DAFFODIL is bowing to the sun,
 The lambs and larks
 Make seasonal remarks,
Nature is having some tremendous fun,
 And little Man
 Is doing what he can.

The secret glade
 Is clothed in tender green,
And there is made
 Trinitrotoluene.

I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,
 For I am learning semaphore again;
And how to decontaminate a street;
 Which gases are a bore, and which a bane:
 And many a thing
 That suits the present Spring.

Be of good cheer—
 Is not the tulip here,
 Fair phosgene too, in bloom,
 A 'non-persistent' fume
 Smelling of hay,
Unlike sweet ethyl-iodoacetate
 (Or K.S.K.),
Which smells of peardrops,
 And will not go away?

Sing, all you happy birds,
 Building your nests
 With paste and paper,
 As the book suggests.
 Do not forget
 To keep your blankets we

Over the porch,
And have at hand
Shovel and sand,
A screen for privacy,
Electric torch,
Hammer and nails
To mend your tiny jails.

For now is Nature mounting to her peak,
And Man, maybe, will do his worst next week.

So, all you creatures
On hill and plain
Who perceive the features
Of Spring again,
Embracing thrushes,
Maternal trees,
Rats in the rushes,
Amorous bees,
At your high toils continue, all,
But if you please
Recall—

There are four main kinds of gases
Which may be used upon the masses,
The sternutators
(Arsenical ‘smokes’),
The lachrymators
(Comparatively jokes),
The asphyxiants
(Or broncho-twisters),
The vesicants
(Or blisters).

Blackbird and lark,
Stand by!
Loving in the dark,
Singing in the sky,

Climbing the clouds on your unconquered wings,
Distinguish clearly these disgusting things—

The lachrymators
Are eye-irritators,
The sternutators
Are nose-irritators;
But all will be well,
As far as we can tell,
If you carry on
In your little respirators.
So go on singing,
Building the nest
Or whatever it is,
And hope for the best.

But when we turn, as Britons do,
To the high seas and oceans blue,
There is cause for even greater satisfaction;
Spring kindles in the waters too;
The sole his sole-mate doth pursue,
And cod for cod confess a warm attraction.
Nor shall these lovers halt
For chemical assault,
Young haddock still shall woo the salmon's daughter;
Wherever Hitler goes
There shall be plenteous rocs,
For Lewisite's at once destroyed by water.

Sing, then, O fish!
Do what you wish,
Alone of living things immune,
Though, I admit,
A direct hit,
Might cause a change of tune,
And frog, the fond,
Whose nose he pokes

Out of the pond
With happy croaks,
Had better sink
With his dear mate below
For he can not be touched, I *think*,
By chlorovinyl dichlorarsine so.

Sing, sing, the Spring!
Sweet hour of eglantine,
And every lovely thing,
A blessed round
Of scent and sound,
Chloracetophenone,
Shy chloropicrin, diphenylamine,
And chemists on the wing.

Strong shine the sun on lover and on lass,
Or else continual torrents wet the twain!
For warm bright weather is not good for gas;
Nor, on the other hand, is heavy rain.

April 19, 1939

LIGHTSHIPS

(Air: 'Bonny Dundee', 'Cockles and Mussels', or what you will)

THE TONGUE and the Girdler, the Mouse and the Nore—
They lead the bold seaman to London's fair shore,
And it's time that the praises of seamen were sung
To the Nore and the Girdler, the Mouse and the Tongue.

A light! A light! O!
A light! A light! O!
The tongue and the girdler,
A light! A light! O!

The life of the ocean holds many a curse,
But in unpleasant weather few things can be worse
Than tossing at anchor in sight of the shore,
As they do in the Girdler, the Mouse and the Nore.

The sailors go by into tempest and dread;
Their home is astern and the ocean's ahead;
But each one is thankful he is not among
The crew of the Girdler, the Mouse or the Tongue.

We sailed out of Rotterdam and into fog,
No sailor was happy not even the dog,
But high were our hearts when about us there swung
The embracing, exciting, great arms of the Tongue.

We took Prince's Channel and said 'We're at home;
Nor never no more over sea will we roar
But settle down at Shoebury and buy
With a view of the Nore and the jolly

The Chapman, the Muc^l
The Blyths and the Ove

But where is the sailor would set them before
The first glimpse of Girdler, the Mouse and the Nore?

So let every Mariner that ever was fain
To come through the storm to old England again
Toss off a full bumper to Trinity House
For the Tongue and the Girdler, the Nore and the Mous

O blest be their sirens, their bells and their buoys!
It's true that they make a lugubrious noise,
But they sound like sweet music on England's fair shore-
And especially the Girdler, the Tongue and the Nore.

A light! A light! O!
A light! A light! O!
The Tongue and the Girdler,
A light! A light! O!

April 26, 1939

THE BOWLINE

THE BOWLINE is the king of knots, or, if you like it,
bends;

A bowline on a bollard is the best of journey's ends:
And, as long as men are mariners, I think it safe to say
This is a thing that never will be done another way.

In Life's unending upward urge how rare it is to find
A Terminus—an Ultimate—Perfection in its kind!

Time was when Michael Angelo was thought the Top in
paint,

But many a pale young gentleman will tell you now he
ain't:

The deed that dazzles us to-day, to-morrow will be drab:
The aeroplane is very *chic*—so was the hansom-cab.

A judgment of the House of Lords no mortal man may
doubt,

Though Parliament, if it should please, may wipe that
judgment out;

But if all the world's fine Parliaments were massed at
Ponders End,

There is a small particular that they could not amend;
'ough the effete democracies, despairing, stooped to ask
'he odious aid of tyrants and Herr Hitler tried the task;
'ough the great Press itself engaged to find a better plan
and offered monstrous prizes to inspire the Little Man;
'ough Jeans and Shaw and Nuffield were co-opted day
by day,

'his is a thing they could not do in any other way.

What ancient hairy tar, how many centuries ago,
Was author of the artifice we do not seem to know.

Laybe old Captain Noah, scarce aware what he was at,
has made a grass-rope ready when he sighted Ararat;

Maybe 'twas wise Ulysses when he made the sailors fall
Against the song of Sirens with a bowline to the mast;
Maybe by Captain Jason was the first example tied,
That some industrious Argonaut might paint the *Argo*
side.

Maybe the infant Raleigh, playing wistfully with string,
Took one more turn by accident and stumbled on the
thing:

Or maybe after all 'twas no tough toiler of the sea,
But some Mamma who tethered thus some toddler to
tree;

Or at the earliest wife's remark, '*Again* you have forgot
The earliest husband's handkerchief received this noble
knot.

Maybe primeval monkeys in the equinoctial gales
Preserved their equilibrium with bowlines in their tails
At all events as long as men are mariners, I say,
Here is a thing that never will be done another way.

The sailor's knots have qualities he'd welcome in a bride—
Hold firm while they are wanted, yet are easily untied;
The more the strain you put on them, the tighter do they
stick;

They are fastened in a flash but you can cast them off a
quick.

The timber hitch, the reef knot, the sheet and fisherman's
bends,

The clove, the sweet, and simple hitch on which so much
depends

Have each a special duty they do perfectly discharge
(Much more than you can say of men or matters, by all
large).

All seamen in their memories preserve a secret niche
For the nameless benefactor who conceived the rolling
hitch,

While manly tears my eyes invade with which I can't
contend
When I discuss the Blackwall hitch or topsail halyard
bend.
But the bowline is the king of knots, and it is grand to
say—
Here is a thing that never will be done another way.

June 2, 1939

ODE ON THE SCHEDULE OF RESERVED OCCUPATIONS

STAND BACK! paste mixers of 30 or more,
Onsetters, and pan men, and those who crush ore,
Bench testers, link benders, fish bobbers, bed lasters,
And those who of baggage or barges are masters!

Brazers, nut frazers,
And emery glaziers,
Coil winders, fault finders
And tinplate behinders,

Stand back! though you would eagerly, we guess,
Join Territorials, or A.F.S.,
And would not grudge your Sunday afternoons
To study bandages or fly balloons.
For you, O heroes, we will not release

For service in auxiliary corps,
Which, part time only, in the time of peace,
Would become whole-time in the time of war.¹

Hydrobiologists of over 25,
And men of every age who dock or dive,
Dezincers, dog whippers
(Mining, other than coal),
Steel ingot strippers
And diggers (clay hole),
Hot drop stampers, and sinterers, and slagggers,
Smith bull-dozers (whatever they may be),
Vehicle riveters, and railway spraggers,
Impregnating pump drivers (if over 23),
Pipe spinners,
Tube tinners,
Saw softeners and template makers,
Fork splitters,
And boiler fitters,

¹ Page 3.

Pig bed men, cold roll boys, and bakers,
Coal hewers,
Shoe screwers,
And cycle wheel truers,
Beam platers,
Masticaters,
And (india rubber) disintegrators—
All these, and more, must sternly frown
On A.R.P.¹ and such temptations
If they are of the age laid down
In the Schedule (Provisional) of Reserved Occupations.

But mark—let none misunderstand.
By good Sir John no man is banned
From entering, whole-time, in peace,
The Navy, Army or Police.
Ore kievers and bricklayers (blue)
May join the Royal Air Force too;
For moulders with sufficient nerve
There is the Royal Fleet Reserve;
And even luggers, unafraid,
May offer for the Fire Brigade;
While, if a master stevedore
Can show that in the case of war
The Army will require his aid,
He may enlist—but in his trade.

Ah, what a picture the Lord Privy Seal has painted, or
written,
In this cool Command Paper² concerning the might of
Great Britain—
All these benders and bladers and binders and beaters and
burners,
All these fitters and finishers, testers and trimmers and
turners,

¹ Except at the volunteer's place of employment.

² Cmd. 6015.

Filers and fettlers and fixers,
Melters and markers and mixers,
Sorters and setters
And goffers and getters,
Assemblers, inspectors,
Annealers, erectors!

Do you not hear, as you read it, the whirring of wheels,
The roar of the rivets, the laying of roads and of keels,
The noise of concreters and crushers and harbours an
hammers?

Do you not see the sweat of tin tossers, saw toothers, am
trammers,

The jig and gauge makers, the joiners, the junkers,
The men at the bricks and the boiler and bunkers?

Let Hitler consider with caution these 63 pages,
Where Britain proposes to keep at the back of the fray
An army of excellent workers at pretty good wages,
And still is prepared to make bets about winning the
day!

We note without surprise that, age or youth,
Nothing is said of those who print¹ or write²
For they, whose trade it is to tell the truth,
Will not be wanted in the next Big Fight.

Nor, by the way, does anybody ask
Members of Parliament to stick to *their* high task

June 27, 1939

¹ In the last edition.

² Unless a lady journalist (page 62).

'AUTOMATIC'

HE AUTOMATIC telephone by many is preferred,
ut it's far from automatic as I understand the word;
he manual toil and trouble have been passed to me and
you,

nd we have to do *eight* actions where we used to do
but two.

is like the Quick Lunch Counter, where the public does
the work,

nd it's no more 'automatic' than a tiger or a Turk.
common modern tendency. Mankind are now agreed
hey will suffer lots of trouble for a little show of speed
Observe how many men, defying all the laws of sense,
ill still maintain that motor-cars save worry and ex-
pense).

Telephoning was a trifle with the good old-fashioned
type;

one hand one clutched the instrument, the other held
a pipe:

it it's patently impossible to keep a pipe alight
While one listens with the left and plays the dial with the
right.

e could sit and dream, write letters, and reflect with
quiet glee

hat women were at work for us, as women ought
to be:

it now we have to concentrate, co-ordinate, control
ind, memory and muscle to achieve the proper hole;

nd the dial is a trial to the literary man,

ho is apt, before he's finished, to forget how he began;
mersed in spiritual things and visions rich and strange,

e madly calls five figures or invents a new exchange.

But most of all I miss the human contacts, I must own,
ie *viva voce* arguments with Riverside or Sloane.

How savage the subscribers were, how patient were
girls.

We feared that they were cretins, and they knew that
were churls.

It seemed to us that nothing but a studied spite for me
Could *continually* put us on to HOP instead of KEN:
They thought it odd that gentlemen so little seemed
rouse

Should be trusted with a telephone—and even with
spouse.

But it generally ended in apology and purr,
As it does in good old England, when the better people
And I recall some sweet unautomatic hours I spent
With an unknown operator on that ancient instrument.
It was near the grand piano, and on winter afternoons
While I waited for a number I would play her little tune
She had her special favourites—‘The Minstrel Boy’ w
one;

It was not wholly *comme il faut*, I know, but it was fun.
And while I played soft music she would softly speak h
mind;

Her father was a carpenter, her mother was not kind;
She was very fond of sausages and mash (another link);
Her friend was an instructor at a roller-skating rink.
Her voice was low and beautiful; I shivered down th
spine

When she said ‘The junctions are engaged’, or ‘I wi
change the line’.

But there, the telephone was moved into another place;
I thought she’d miss her music, so I sang to her, in case
And many a busy business man has signified his joy
When he bounded to his telephone and heard ‘The Mi
strel Boy’.

I never met the lady, and I never knew her name,
But there was a sad hiatus when the automatic came.

Once more the grim Machine has put Romance upon
the spot;

like to think she is the Talking Clock, but she is not;
and I am left forlorn with this unfeeling little disk,
Which has no soul for harmony, and has no time to frisk.
and though I do salute the brain by which it was designed,
and my dear Postmaster-General is really very kind,
Nor would I seem ungrateful or too much behind my
day—

As far as I'm concerned, Sir, you can take the thing away!
and, I might add, not only do I find this boon a bore,
but communications often seem no better than before.

do not much complain of that, for then I dial *O*,
and some young lady answers me, and I can say 'Hullo'.

Yet even this does not console as it was wont to do,
Nor I find the new young ladies rather automatic too.

September 6, 1939

'NO QUARREL'

'WE HAVE no quarrel with the German nation'—

One would not quarrel with the trustful sheep:
But generation after generation

They cough up rulers who disturb our sleep.

'We have no quarrel with the German nation.'

They're fond of music, poetry, and beer:
But, all the same, with tiresome iteration
They choose a fool to govern them—and cheer.

'We have no quarrel with the German nation';

But no one else upsets the common pot.
They are the cause of every conflagration—
Is it a mere coincidence, or what?

We had no quarrel with the German nation

When Wilhelm was the madman off the chain;
We helped along their rehabilitation—
And now, my hat, they do it all again!

'We have no quarrel with the German nation';

And Wagner's works are very good indeed:
But if they *must* repeat this aberration
It might be better if they did not breed.

'We have no quarrel with the German nation';

In their affairs of course we have no say:
But it would seem some major operation
(On head and heart) may be the only way.

September 20, 1939

A. H.

(An Epitaph)

PAUSE, PRAY, and pity, passer-by:
Here, as in life, I, Hitler, lie.
Forbear from mockery or mirth;
These are the saddest bones in earth:
For they reluctantly recall
The mightiest might-have-been of all.

It is unusual to find
A perfect thing of any kind;
The *prima donna*'s charms are small;
The beauty has no voice at all
(God has insisted, some believe,
On keeping something up His
sleeve).

So I, who had so much of what
The other fellow hadn't got—
A new, unnatural cross between
A mystic, monster, and machine;
From every weakening force apart,
Untouched by alcohol—and heart;
Who shunned tobacco—and the
truth;

Who dazzled, yet degraded, Youth;
Who drove my country to the top
And then insanely let her drop—
Half devil and half dynamo,
No man could tell how far I'd go;
And, but for one unhappy trait,
I might be going strong to-day.
I had momentum, I had weight,
But I could simply not go straight.

Like others in the history-book,
I lost a crown by turning crook.

I might have worn the Hero's robe,
A Washington to half the globe:
Instead of that I chose to be
The world's Horatio Bottomley.

October 25, 1939

WHERE IS YOUNG LANCE . . .?

WHERE IS young Lance the Leftist, who shouted 'Arms
for Spain!'

Who doubted so the fortitude of Mr. Chamberlain;
And if such arms had been dispatched would soon have
spent his breath
On hissing that his countrymen were Profiteers in
Death?

Where are Iseult and Steve, who, hanging posters from
their necks,

Marched fearlessly to Downing Street and cackled 'Save
the Czechs!'

Who cursed because we did not save the Abyssinian souls,
But thought it very rash indeed to guarantee the Poles?

Oh, where is Battling Barbara, who thought it would be
good

To Stand against Aggression, till we actually stood?

And where is Spitfire Florence, who confidently swore
That if we threatened war enough there would not be
a war?

Where is young Know-all Nesta, so mystically sure
That anything that Russia did was peaceable and pure;
And, while of course our Empire caused her honest blood
to boil,

Explained that Righteous Russia would not pinch an inch
of soil?

Where too is Percy Pink, who backs a loser every race
But, like the happy tipster, loses neither funds nor face?
And where is Modern Mervyn, who was bubbling fire
and sparks

But cannot aid the war because it's not in aid of Marx?
And what of Comrade Chris, who thinks democracy such
fun—

Always excepting anything our Parliament has done;

And Ermyntrude, who wants free speech and voting
everywhere,
Although of course in England an election's never fair?
Where are the youthful genii who know exactly how
The cosmos should be managed? For their chance is
surely now.
Where are the New School Knickers who despise the Old
School Ties?
What do they do to show themselves more good and brave
and wise?
Their sisters are in hospitals; their brothers won't be long
But they are still explaining where the Government was
wrong,
Or in *The Bilious Weekly* very lengthily expound
The reasons why they think their 'ideology' is sound;
While Reginald, who actively can not assist the war,
Proclaims the right to know at once what he is fighting for.
Where Mervyn is, or Barbara, we simply do not know:
But Lance, I hear, is lecturing in Prudence, Ohio.

November 1, 1939

S. OR S.?

I SHALL buy a fine bonnet to give to my love,
And earn a good mark from His Majesty's Gov.:
Has not Oliver Stanley, who manages Trade,
Recommended 'Spend money, that money be made'?

But Trade and the Treasury do not agree.
My love will get no pretty bonnet from me,
For Simon, who manages Money, has just
Said I mustn't spend money except when I must.

And can I pretend that she *needs* a new hat?
No, no, she can totter along without that.
Yet Stanley has clearly said 'Spend what you can,
And keep in employment the poor working-man'.

And how will the hat-manufacturer pay
His rates and his taxes if I stay away?
It is obvious, then, that His Majesty's Gov.
Would *like* me to buy a new hat for my love.

Or is it? It's not. For Sir John, I suggest,
Who manages Taxes, is sure to know best;
And he has decreed that residual quids
Ought *not* to be spent on superfluous lids.

No, no, that is selfish indulgence, not Trade.
If anything's left when the taxes are paid
I must lend it at once to His Majesty's Gov.
And not buy a pretty new hat for my love.

I must not spend a penny I cannot afford:
But then it is unpatriotic to hoard.
O. Stanley would hate me to sit on a *sou*:
J. Simon will pay me quite well if I do.

No doubt Mr. Keynes could explain upon oath
How a well-meaning chap is to satisfy both;
But it is a bit hard to know how to behave
When Stanley says 'Spend it' and Simon says 'Save'.

No, I do not know *how* the debate is to end
When Simon says 'Save it' and Stanley says 'Spend'.
Meanwhile, I shall buy a new hat for my love,
Whatever the views of His Majesty's Gov.

December 1, 1933

BALLAD FOR BRITONS

'Don't Let Our Tommy Join the Vegetarians'

A MOTHER read the news beside the fire one afternoon;
Her husband fed their first-born with stewed apples and
a spoon:

But presently the woman from the tidings of the day
Her tearful eyes averted and these burning words did say:
'It seems that this here Stalin, like that Hitler, doesn't
drink.

He doesn't smoke. He don't eat meat. Well, don't it
make you think?

Mussolini lives on lettuces. His drinks no man can
blame.

And Napoleon, so the paper says, was very much the same:

Well, don't let our Tommy join the vegetarians!

I'm sure we don't want no dictators here.

See what it done to all them Nords and Naryans!

They may feel good, but, goodness, ain't they queer?

It's very strange, and I can't understand it:

Cut out the beef—and man becomes a bandit.

There's something in the veg.

As sets his mind on edge,

And makes him itch to boss it, far and near.

I want our little Tommy

To have breeding and bonhommy—

So let's feed the boy on British beef and beer.'

Her spouse replied, 'You're right, Maria, as you always
are.

It only shows this abstinence must never go too far.

I've often said it ought to be prohibited by law—

Well, look how many years we've had to suffer Bernard
Shaw!

They say it keeps a bloke like Hitler fit. All very well;
But what's the use of Hitler when he's fit it's hard to tell.
I shouldn't wonder much if God had sent us fags and drink
Just to keep us out of mischief, dear. Well, don't it make
you think?

Don't let our Tommy join the vegetarians!
We don't want no dictators in the home.
See what it done to all them nasty Naryans!
See what it done in Russia and in Rome!
All very well to have your lettuce luncheon,
And then go hunting with a rubber truncheon;
All very well to chew
A radish-root or two,
And then slip out and slaughter half the sphere!
Eat mutton and be matey;
You may not live till eighty—
But what's the good of living if you're queer?"

'It isn't only Europe,' she replied, to his applause,
'There's dangers nearer home of which the carrot is the
cause.
Who is the bloke that wants to knock all other countries
out?
It ain't the gent sits smoking after raw beef-steak and stout.
It's the wisps what live on water, dear, and farinaceous
fare
As wants to send the British Army almost everywhere;
Though, come to that, I've noticed, when we has to fight
the foe,
It's the beefers and the boozers, as a rule, is first to go.

Don't let our Tommy join the vegetarians
And be a bully or a buccaneer!
Shield him from these here teetotalitarians—
We don't require no bijou Fuehrers here.

*Tell him how oft a vegetable diet
Goes hand in hand with rudery and riot;
Don't overdo the fruits,
Teach him to smoke cheroots
And take his pint of stout without a tear.
We want our little Tommy
To have breeding and bonhommy,
So let's build him up with British beef and beer.*

December 20, 1939

HOLY RUSSIA

I ALWAYS thought that Russia was a bore;
And now we know that Russia is a bane.
There's one thing pleases me about this war—
We can't have *quite* such Russian rot again.

We are so scrupulous and kind to-day,
Old Nick himself must not receive attack.
We see no colours in the world but grey:
But here is one undoubted bit of black.

O Lord, what lectures we have had to hear,
In what a pious and a pompous tone!
This was the Stiggins of the hemisphere!
And now the gaff is well and truly blown.

Let horrid bourgeois hunt the smaller fry,
And base capitalists their plunder plan.
But Holy Russia would not hurt a fly
(Just now it seems uncertain if she can).

Red Russia—red in each false tooth and claw;
Red Russia—scarlet with the Tory sins;
Red Russia—cheers!—takes several on the jaw!
Red Russia is not worth a row of Finns.

Yet think how all our little pundits whined
When Hitler took a chance, and Neville missed his
Some Latin words are present in my mind—
'Non tali auxilio, nec defensoribus istis.'

I always thought that Russia was a cow;
And now we know that Russia is a cad.
The light is out in that large turnip now.
The gaff is blown. And I, for one, am glad.

January 10, 1940

FOUR O'CLOCK

OR, A THOUGHT FOR ALL

IT'S FOUR o'clock. I'm not relieved till five.

My soul is broody, though the stars are bright.
My nose is froze; my feet are not alive.

But I am not sailing the North Sea to-night.

I have not paid the rent. I have not paid
The income-tax, the rates, or Mr. Wright:
And how is all this money to be made?

But I am not sailing the North Sea to-night.

It's far too cold. And now here comes the fog.
My underclothing is absurdly slight.
I know now how it feels to be a frog.
But I am not sailing the North Sea to-night.

I sometimes think the Government are wrong;
And Mrs. Rattle says that Hitler's right.
The war, it seems, may be a little long.
But I am not sailing the North Sea to-night.

They've rationed all the things I like to eat;
The things I drink they're taxing out of sight,
The things I want to say are not discreet.
But I am not sailing the North Sea to-night.

The people mustn't buy the things I sell;
The things I make mean nothing in the fight.
I do not think that I feel very well.
But I am not sailing the North Sea to-night.

For eighteen weeks we've waited for the foe,
To make it clear that right is more than might.
I did that five-and-twenty years ago.
But I am not sailing the North Sea to-night.

Maybe that lump of pork was a mistake;
My stomach's like a bowline-on-the-bight.
And now, of course, a tooth begins to ache.
But I am not sailing the North Sea to-night.

This black-out is—this black-out *is* a bore;
I cannot get my blasted torch to light.
There's very little to be said for war.
But I am not sailing the North Sea to-night.

The ropes are ice. The fingers do not feel.
The boat is covered with a cloak of white.
But there are no fat mines beneath her keel;
And I am not sailing the North Sea to-night.

There is some trouble in my starboard lung.
I smoke too much. No doubt it serves me right.
I *think* I may have cancer on the tongue.
But I am not sailing the North Sea to-night.

January 24, 1940

'OUR MEMBER'

I HAS come to me with a shock that there are no nice songs about Members of Parliament. No 'nice', affectionate songs. English poesy abounds with vague but lighting references to 'statesmen' and 'politicians'. Sir W. S. Gilbert wrote a disrespectful song about the House of Lords. And there is some moving stuff about democracy in the abstract—that memorable piece, for example, in the Socialist Sunday School Hymn Book I bought on the Domain, Sydney, Australia:

'Democracy! Democracy!
Our sordid lives take thou in hand.
Transmute them to a symphony
Of organ-music grand.'

But there is no big ditty about the House of Commons as a whole or the Member of Parliament as a character. There are songs about 'Squire', 'Parson', 'Publican', 'Varmer', the Blacksmith, the Bobby, the Poacher, and even the Agricultural Labourer—about Jack Tar and Tommy Atkins (what, by the way, is the name of the typical Air Force man?). But there is no old loving song that springs to the mind and lips of the citizen when his parliamentary representative appears.

This, surely, is a pity, especially at the present time, when we are fighting to defend democracy, of which an important part is the right to elect (and eject) Members of Parliament.

But how should the high theme be treated? We want something which will fix the local legislator as a figure comparable to Tom Bowline or Varmer Giles. This sort of thing, perhaps:

God bless our dear Member——

That surprises you? Well, if you are surprised it shows how real and urgent is the need.

God bless our dear Member, who with such precision Expresses the feelings of this here division; For though 'twas one party what gave him the call To the best of his ability he represents all:

He represents all—

Represents all—

To the best of his ability he represents all.

When trouble descends upon mansion or hut The poor blighted foreigner must keep his mouth shut; But that ain't our way in the land of the free—

We write a long letter to our dear M.P.:

To our dear M.P.—

To our dear M.P.—

We write a long letter to our dear M.P.

[*Note.*—No harm, I think, in teaching a slight constitutional lesson as well as 'building-up' the Member. Let us continue.]

'What ho!' says our Member. 'If that ain't hard cheese! He puts down a Question as bold as you please; And all the King's Cabinet gets indigestion When our representative puts down a Question:

Puts down a Question—

Puts down a Question—

When our representative puts down a Question.

There's comings and goings for days in Whitehall Until the fine Minister answers and all: And if the said answer ain't proper and plain Why, up gets our Member and asks him again!

He asks him again—

Asks him again—

Up gets our Member and asks him again.

[*Note*.—‘And all’. You do not perhaps understand or
approve of these words. All right. With iron determina-
tion we proceed.]

emember Joe Larkin, whose lungs were that queer?
emember the wicked assaults on our beer?
emember young Bert they was leaving to die
ntil our dear Member popped up and asked ‘Why?’

He popped up and asked ‘Why?’—

Popped up and asked ‘Why?’—

ou should see our dear Member pop up and ask ‘Why?’

hen up at Westminster his brow he do furrow
ith guarding the rights of his County (and Borough).
e don’t talk a lot, and we like him for that;
ut when they provoke him he answers them flat:

He answers them flat—

Answers them flat—

es, when they provoke him he answers them flat.

[*Note*.—Who are ‘they’? Well, it is important that
very constituent should conceive his Member as battling
ngle-handed against a vague but vast federation of less
eneficial forces.]

Mr. Speaker!” says he; and we know for a fact
hat in a few minutes the Chamber is packed:
he Members come running from smoke-room and street,
Mr. Churchill at once hurries back from the Fleet:

Back from the Fleet—

Back from the Fleet—

Mr. Churchill at once hurries back from the Fleet.

Mr. Chamberlain leaves his pork chop on the plate
o hear what our Member is wishful to state;
nd when he sits down at the end of his chat
every Member’s upstanding and waves his top-hat:

*Waves his top-hat—
Waves his top-hat—
Every Member's upstanding and waves his top-hat.*

And that is the cause why in England's fair clime
The poor working-classes have such a good time:
It don't matter what is the trouble, you see;
They've only to write to their own dear M.P.:

*Their own dear M.P.—
Their own dear M.P.—*

They've only to write to their own dear M.P.

[Note.—You don't like that verse so much? All right.]

Thank God our dear Member's respectable too,
And a family man same as Bill, me, and you;
Likewise he is [he's not] wealthy, which don't matter
much,
But [For] look what he done for our football and such:

*Our football and such—
Football and such—*

Look what he done for our football and such.

So when you are lying in hoggish repose
Just remember your Member who's still on his toes,
A-marching through lobbies far into the night
To stand for our freedom and fight for the right:

*To fight for the right—
Fight for the right—*

To stand for our freedom and fight for the right.

And now, I suppose, you will say that all this is ‘merely
wishful thinking’. All right. So is *God Save the King*.

January 31, 1940

BLITZKRIEG

Now we have bombed the lightship, and sunk a fishing
smack,

nd sprayed with lead a lifeboat, brave Germans let's
get back.

O, no, fly on, brave Germans! A nobler target dawns—
see a big sand castle, and a boy is catching prawns.

We'll show the shrinking English what German might
can do:

see an armoured lifebuoy and a submarine canoe;

see two sailors swimming and one upon a raft—

and by, intrepid gunners, and rake him fore and aft.'

February 4, 1940

FED-UP

(*Brief reply to about two hours' oratory*)

THE FUEHRER says this, and the Fuehrer says that;
The Fuehrer discourses through more than his hat.
The answer is brief and the answer is flat—
We're fed-up with the Fuehrer.

The Fuehrer orates in his animal way;
The ether vibrates to the usual bray;
But nobody bothers to listen to-day—
We're fed-up with the Fuehrer.

The Fuehrer 'insists', and the Fuehrer 'decides',
Like a Prussian Canute cocking snooks at the tides;
But the Cosmos is quietly holding its sides—
We're fed-up with the Fuehrer.

The Fuehrer says 'Peace', and the Fuehrer means 'war'
The Fuehrer's a bully, an ass and a bore;
And we don't really care what he says any more—
We're fed-up with the Fuehrer.

The Fuehrer, we fear, has a bug in his brain;
It seems that his patience is ended again;
There are others whose patience has suffered a strain—
We're fed-up with the Fuehrer.

The Fuehrer dishonours the title of 'rat'.
No doubt there are Germans with whom we could chat,
But till they are ready the answer is flat—
We're fed-up with the Fuehrer.

February 11, 1940

CROCUS TIME

(‘When the crocus blossoms . . .’ they are saying in Berlin.
Daily Paper)

WHEN THE crocus blossoms,’ hiss the women in Berlin,
he will press the button, and the battle will begin.
hen the crocus blossoms, up the German knights will go,
id flame and fume and filthiness will terminate the foe.’

hen the crocus blossoms and the flags of spring are
flown

e shall spray the fields with chloro-acetophenone;
visite and phosgene shall lay the English low,
th one or two *disgusting* things of which they do not
know.’

hen the crocus blossoms, tanks and cannon in their
teeth,

uds of parachute-men will fall upon Blackheath;
oops of well-armed divers, who have walked the ocean
bed,

I punctually land and shoot Herr Churchill through
the head.’

hen the crocus blossoms, winged torpedoes fill the air,
secret rays directed to the Bank and Leicester Square;
man germs of this and that, as swift as German swords,
I liquidate the Cabinet and purge the House of Lords.’

hen the crocus blossoms, down will go the British Fleet;
dient German barnacles will through their bottoms
eat.

at black German searchlights will hide the English
moon,
every little German child will suck a silver spoon.’

'When the crocus blossoms, not a neutral will remain;
All the happy Balkans will bless the Fuehrer's reign;
And half the horrid English, repenting of their sin,
Will soon, they say, be welcoming Gauleiter Goering in.'

'When the crocus blossoms,' hiss the women, 'breaks the
war.'

But can it be that we have heard some hint of this before?
When the first chrysanthemums were burning red and
gold,

Something very similar, I fancy, was foretold.

Still, when the cold world wakes again, and sings in sap
and sod,

When the very rat salutes the noblest work of God,
Herr Hitler and his chemists *may* send death to me and
you—

For it's just the sort of silly thing that silly man would do.

February 14, 1940

ACCORDING TO PRITT

(*review of a recent book by Mr. D. N. Pritt, K.C.,
in which Russia's action in Finland is defended*)

Finns dislike their Government, by which they are
oppressed,

if for British cunning they would love the Russians
; but;

Russians, on the other hand, have very tender skins,
easily feared invasion by the brutal little Finns.

as right and proper for the Russians to attack,
was very naughty of the Finns to answer back;
country most responsible, as usual, is Brit.;
every one is upside down excepting Comrade Pritt.

February 18, 1940

SPRING, 1940

THE SPRING is coming. Therefore dust
Your respirator while you may.
The Spring is coming; and you must
Be ready for the mustard spray.

The Spring is coming. Therefore fill
A bag or two with sand or clay,
And pile them anywhere you will,
Provided they are in the way.

The Spring is coming. In the glade
The air is full of lovely sound;
But you must get your garden spade
And dig a dungeon underground.

The Spring is coming. Newt and frog
Will soon be mating in the pond.
And Hitler is a dirty dog.
And have you bought a Savings Bond?

The Spring is coming. In the sky
Some horrid fowl are on the wing;
But our young falcons fly as high.
At all events, here comes the Spring!

March 10, 1940

VON SPEE
OR, TWO GHOSTS

'I AM an Admiral. My name was sweet;
I lay at ease among the sailor shades.'

'I am a Captain. Dying in defeat,
I did some honour to the best of trades.'

'But one called Hitler rules the German Fleet
And sells our ship for safety-razor-blades.'

March 13, 1940

TOUGH GUY

'WE DO not trust old Chamberlain,' they buzz,
'He hoped it would not rain; and now it does.
How can that statesman prosecute a war
Who went so far in search of peace before?'

This is the logic of a peevish child.
The man of peace is not for ever mild:
And they who most prefer the weather warm
Are not less tough than others in the storm.

The man who staked the most upon a crook
Should be the best at bringing him to book:
Let every boaster in Berlin be warned—
Hell hath no fury like a Neville scorned.

March 24, 1940

THE CORKSCREW

VON RIBBENTROP, the cosmic flop, tries wickedly to
wangle

An extra to the Axis and construct a crude triangle;
And the poor old twisted Axis looks more like a rusty
screw,

For A hates B, and B hates A, and C distrusts the two.

Imagine old Joe Stalin with *Mein Kampf* upon his mind,
In which the Russian rulers are 'the dregs of human kind!'
Imagine Mussolini (who has not a lot to learn)

Announcing that, on second thoughts, he loves the
Comintern!

When the Kremlin publishes *Mein Kampf* and Russia's
hugged by Rome

Von Ribbentrop, the cosmic flop, may see his ship come
home.

March 31, 1940

BAKU OR, THE MAP GAME

IT'S JOLLY to look at the map
And finish the foe in a day.
It's not easy to get at the chap;
These neutrals are so in the way.
But if you say 'What would *you* do
To fill the aggressor with gloom?'
Well, we might drop a bomb on Baku,
Or what about bombs on Batum?

Other methods, of course, may be found.
We might send a fleet up the Inn:
We might burrow far underground
And come up in the heart of Berlin.
But I think a more promising clue
To the totalitarian doom
Is the dropping of bombs on Baku,
And perhaps a few bombs on Batum.

The scale of the map should be small
If you're winning the war in a day.
It mustn't show mountains at all,
For mountains may be in the way.
But, taking a statesmanlike view,
And sitting at home in a room,
I'm all for some bombs on Baku
And, of course, a few bombs on Batum.

Sometimes I invade the dear Dutch,
Sometimes I descend on the Danes;
They oughtn't to mind very much,
And they don't seem to have any planes;

I slip through the Swiss and say 'Boo!'
I pop over the Alps and say 'Boom!'
But I still drop a bomb on Baku,
And I always drop bombs on Batum.

Vladivostok is not very far;
Sometimes I attack him from there.
With the troops in a rather fast car
I am on him before he's aware.
And then, it's so hard to say who
Is fighting, precisely, with whom,
That I'm keen about bombing Baku,
I insist upon bombing Batum.

April 3, 1940

THE WINSTON TOUCH

LORD NELSON and Sir Francis Drake looked down from
Heaven's door,
And saw the British sailor everywhere except ashore.
'Sir Francis,' said Lord Nelson, 'here's a very foxy foe—
Torpedoes, mines, and bombs—here's death about, above,
below.'

'I'm proud,' replied Sir Francis, 'that they still invoke
my name,
But I do believe they do me too much honour, all the
same.
Here's cannon-balls the size of sharks and mines as big
as whales,
Sharp gunnery in storms of snow, and thirty knots in
gales!'

'A battle,' said Lord Nelson, 'is a thing we would not
miss.'
'But, my goodness,' said the gallant ghosts, 'we're both
well out of this!'

April 14, 1940

'NEUTRALITY'

DEAR NEUTRALS, non-belligerents, and all in
that sad boat,
It's black or white, and, in the end, you too
must cast a vote.

No man can stand aside from a tornado and be
vague:

No nation in the world can say, '*We* will not
have the plague.'

April 17, 1940

HITLER'S BIRTHDAY

GOD MOVES in a mysterious way;
The devil still must have his fun:
And it is not for us to say
 Why you have lived to 51.
But this new candle on the cake
 Should be the last they light for you:
God will not make the same mistake;
 The devil soon must have his due.
(And recollect, you little fake, Napoleon
 died at 52.)

April 21, 1940

THE DEVIL TO PAY

FROM VILE tobacco, brandy, beer,
From whisky, wine, and gin,
Three hundred million pounds a year
The Chancellor draws in.
And it is terrible to think
 What hangs on you and me;
For if we did not smoke or drink
 Where would our country be?
But that the virtuous would not,
 I'm very sure, deplore;
They love their country such a lot
 They'd *like* to pay some more.
Indeed, it must feel very queer,
 It must upset their sleep,
To hold their liberties so dear,
 To hold their liberties so dear,
 And get them all so cheap.

April 28, 1940

SONG FOR CIVILIANS

WHAT CAN I do to win the war to-day?

Here is my breakfast—all is as before.

Here is the news, and here's an English May.

What can I do to-day to win the war?

What can I do to-day to win the war?

Here is my lunch; and here is peace and play.

Up in the clouds boy-bombers race and roar,

What can I do to win the war to-day?

Here is my bed, my book; the lamp is bright.

Over the sea the steamers pick their way;

Over the bags the soldiers watch the night,

What have I done to win the war to-day?

May 5, 1940

RUMOURS

DO NOT believe the tale the milkman tells;
No troops have mutinied at Potters Bar.
Nor are there submarines at Tunbridge Wells.
The B.B.C. will warn us when there are.

Do not believe the Major's easy plan.
He wants to land a force at Budapest.
He knows the Danube well, the dear old man,
But maybe General Gort and Co. know best.

Do not believe in Mr. Told-you-so.
Do not repeat the 'Might-have-beens' and 'Buts'.
Now is the time to let your neighbour know
We have the gold, the ginger, and the guts.

Do not believe that God has been cast down
Because the Berlin beast is breathing still.
This is the one true story in the town—
We can defeat the devil, and we will.

May 19, 1940

ALL THE OLD PLACES

ALL THE old places in the news again—

All the old rivers underneath the guns—

Bapaume and Abbeville, Marne and Somme and Aisne,

But I am told I must not hate the Huns.

All the green fields we freed return to death—

All the young mothers bravely on the run—

All the air filthy with the same foul breath—

But, I am told, I must not hate the Hun.

For they who do this every twenty years

Should be forgiven. It is just their fun.

They know not what they do, the little dears.

All right—all right—I will not hate the Hun.

May 26, 1940

CIVIL DEFENCE

THE CHANCES are they will not hit this street;

It does not matter greatly if they do.

There will be one less bomb upon the Fleet;

And one more year of Hell for you-know-who.

We used to think we mattered very much;

And now we do not matter any more.

Our little home may be a rabbit-hutch;

But there shall be a lion at the door.

So let the bullies bluster overhead.

There will be fewer bombs upon the Fleet.

And, anyhow, it's better to be dead

Than live in Britain under Hitler's feet.

June 2, 1940

PAPER.

THE PAPER situation's worse:
So I express myself in verse.
For verse, as everybody knows,
Is less extravagant than prose.
The statesman, editor, divine
May take a very lofty line;
But it is equally the case
That they demand a lengthy space;
While we, the humble men of rhyme,
Say just as much in half the time.
The Burkes, like searchlights, catch the eye
By roaming widely round the sky:
The Belloc, like the ruby, glows
More richly than the longest prose.
We grow, we murder mighty trees
And cart them far across the seas
That statesmen, with protracted fuss,
May emphasize the obvious.
The poet, with a tiny twig,
Can say a mouthful just as big.
And with this brief exordium
To my entrancing theme I come.

O Paper, king of everything,
And soon, I think, acknowledged king,
We knew that Learning, Art, and Trade
Could not exist without your aid:
But it is evident that War
Needs you as much, and maybe more.
I don't accept Napoleon's norms—
An army marches on its *forms*,
On strength-returns and secret lists
Of plumbers' mates and Methodists,

On signal-pad and message-book,
On rolls of bombers who can cook.
The Germans, in their nasty way,
Produce surprises every day,
But I will bet they still have got
The oldest weapon of the lot.
If petrol vanished in the night
The troops would still contrive to fight.
But if they shut the paper-shop
The war would simply have to stop.

So you and I, who do not fight,
At least can aid them when we write.
It is our duty to be terse:
We must express ourselves in verse.
All prose, until we win the strife,
Should be expelled from public life.
Nor do I think that by this course
We shall be sacrificing force.
The Garvin might seem twice as sage
If he had only half a page.
The Civil Servants might be more
Intelligible than before.
No citizen could well evade
A couplet from the Board of Trade.
Or treat with levity a frank
And nasty sonnet from the bank.
How beautiful would be *The Times*
If it were all composed in rhymes!
And even *Hansard* might be gay
If it were printed in this way.

We must be brief, you must allow:
And I will start by stopping now.

June 5, 1940

'PHONEY'

DEAR UNCLE SAM, I seem to remeinder
(Was it October or was it November?),
Somebody called it a 'phoney' war—
Somebody said it was rather a bore.

Dear Uncle Sam, is it still so 'phoney'?
Is the fight for liberty 'all boloney'?
And when men speak of the British guts
Does Forty-Second Street still say 'Nuts'?

Dear Uncle Sam, do you still think, brother,
One bit of Europe's as bad as another?
Possibly, Sam, but forgive us, do,
For now you're a corner of Europe, too.

June 9, 1940

SONG FOR THE GERMAN PEOPLE

(June 15)

'OUR FUEHRER first acquired the Czechs:
They hang like chains about our necks.
Our Fuehrer then destroyed the Poles:
May God have mercy on our souls!
Our Fuehrer next annexed the Danes:
And he is still collecting chains.
Our Fuehrer has subdued the Dutch:
But this does not delight us much.
We have the Belgians too; but then,
We have the hate of God and men.
The French, they say, are in retreat:
But we have not enough to eat.
He can make Europe, if he please,
A continent of refugees:
But still, with every forward stride,
He digs our grave more deep and wide.'

June 16, 1940

SIREN TIME

WE WASTE our sleep in gazing at the blue;

The bumbling bombers blindly drop their loads,
A few men die; but more have died from 'flu

And many more are killed in crossing roads.

So let us do as we are told to do;

But let no sky-hog make a mug of us.

The Heinkel's not as nasty as the 'flu;

The bomber is less deadly than the bus.

June 23, 1940

WOPSHIPS

SAID CAPTAIN B. SPAGHETTI to Admiral Vermicelli:
'My ship is at the jetty; there is battle in my belly;
I will make the foe a jelly; I will knock the foeman flat.'
Said Admiral Vermicelli: 'What would be the point of
that?

'There's no need for us to wrestle; and the British Fleet
is petty.'

'So attach your gallant vessel still more tightly to the jetty.
Leave the Germans to advance, for they do advancing
best.'

'And the Government of France will discreetly do the rest.'

June 30, 1940

TOP WOP

ALTHOUGH WE all regret the Hun
Has—for a fleeting moment—won,
We must admit he's tough:
And, much as one deplores the mess
That Hitler's made, one must confess
The man has done his stuff.

But when I think of him who tops
The wretched race we call the Wops,
I do begin to chase.
This fellow, sitting on the fence
And falling off, at our expense,
As soon as it was safe—

This fellow—well, I mean to say,
One cannot quite ignore the way
That Hitler sees things through;
But when I think of Hitler's mate
I really must expectorate—
There's nothing else to do.

We may commend, although we curse,
The pluck of him who takes our purse,
Or robs us in the woods;
But no one much respects the chap
Who, with his hands upon his lap,
Merely receives the goods.

One honours, though one does not like,
The valiant but voracious pike;
We know it is his way.
But it is really rather much
he jellyfish get such
ion of the prey.

But, happily, this kind of work
Is apt to finish with a jerk;
And I laugh quite a lot
To think that, when the war is done,
Whatever happens to the Hun,
The Wop is on the spot.

And when the last account is paid,
And all the little thugs parade
To take the final drop,
For petty larceny and lies
Men will especially despise
The pitiful Top Wop.

July 3, 1940

'VENI, VIDI, VICHY'

WHERE IS poor Pétain, France's fiercest foe,
Where is the Government that knows no 'buts'?
They are at Vichy, where the old men go
To ease their conscience and regain their guts.

May the bright waters cure them, if they can;
May frequent rubbings stop the rot and rust!
But I should like to be the massage man,
Who thumps those bulging bellies till they bust.

July 7, 1940

THESE ARE THE BOYS

THESE ARE the boys of whom we said
‘They are not what their fathers were;
They have no heart, and little head;
They slouch, and do not cut their hair.’

Yet these like falcons live and die;
These every night have new renown;
And while we heave a single sigh
They shoot a brace of bombers down.

July 28, 1940

'MORALE'

OR, MRS. SMITH'S SOFT ANSWER TO A 'SOCIAL SURVEYOR'

'YES, MY morale is nicely, thanks.
 You won't find no Fifth Column here.
I've got no money in the banks
 (In fact, at times, I'm short of beer).
But I'm as tough as them that has,
 And tougher, if the truth was known,
Than them that lives on jam and jazz—
 You leave my old morale alone!'

'No, I DON'T think that Hitler's won—
 How dare you ask me such a thing.
For all I know, Miss, you're a Hun.
 I'd say the same if you was King.
My old morale is Okey-Doke;
 And, come to that, Miss, how's your own?
Are you a German, or a joke?
 YOU LEAVE MY OLD MORALE ALONE!'

July 31, 1940

FRANCE

I HATE to think that pompous men in spurs
Are swilling claret where we used to dine,
And Mademoiselle, with that sad smile of hers,
Is wasting on the Hun her wit and wine.

One thought alone can comfort me at night,
When I recall the *Café de la Lune*:
If what the temperance fellows say is right
He'll have cirrhosis of the liver soon.

August 4, 1940

DOMESTIC HOLLOW-WARE, ETC.

[‘I have already stressed the urgent and imperative need to limit civilian consumption. . . . There will be included in the lower rate schedule articles like clothing, boots and shoes . . . domestic hollow-ware like pots, pans, and kettles . . . cups, saucers, and plates, if made of earthenware . . . domestic brooms and brushes . . . and finally newspapers, periodicals, and books.’—*The Chancellor of the Exchequer: ‘Hansard,’ July 23, Columns 648 and 650.]*

SIR KINGSLEY WOOD, Sir Kingsley Wood,
I don’t believe you’re any good.
You shone, as everybody owns,
At selling stamps and fixing ’phones.
For all the common people knew,
You made the aeroplanes ‘accrue’;
And certainly you took the air
With brave persistence everywhere.
(I shall, because I mean no ill,
Forget the Nosey Parker Bill.)
But now, a dear four-sided pole,
I see you in the roundest hole.
It’s not for poets to opine
If high finance is in your line,
For on that subject, to be frank,
The poet’s mind is just as blank;
But even poets may (and ought)
Complain about a tax on thought;
However little may accrue
Of that ‘commodity’ to you.

Sir Kingsley Wood, if you had said
‘I wish that fewer books were read,
Reading always was a bane,
not occur again,’

Why, then we should have understood
Just where we were, Sir Kingsley Wood;
And nobody could well dispute
You knew a book from, say, a boot.
But now, from Schedule Number Two,
It's far from certain if you do.

Domestic hollow-ware and books,
The tools of teachers, chars, and cooks,
And petticoats, and skirts, and stays,
And mustard-pots, and Shakespeare's plays,
Goloshes, socks, and Holy Writ
(For Bibles too must do their bit),
Macaulay, Dickens, Scott, and Lamb,
And things in which you put the jam—
All these impartially you pass
Into the selfsame fiscal class;
And in the scale of Ways and Means
Weigh Wells and Shaw with soup-tureens.

You drive the scholars from their seats,
For Euclid pays as well as Keats;
Nor may they knit the boyish brow
O'er *Deeds that Won the Empire* now.
All knowledge, I suppose, is doomed,
For knowledge must not be 'consumed'.
But least of all we need what's new,
And last year's calendar must do.
You're even putting 12 *per cent*
On the reports of Parliament;
And we'll be paying through the nose
For reading your delicious prose.
In fact, as far as I can see,
A betting book alone is free.

Sir Kingsley, when your star is set,
You will, no doubt, go higher yet;
And England's men of letters there
Will greet you with a stony stare.
But I should like to hear that day
What Doctor Johnson has to say.

August 7, 1940

ROARING JOE

THEY CALL him Admiral Goebbels, and they call him
Roaring Joe;

No ordinary seaman is so hard upon the foe.

No wonder Admiral Raeder looks with jealousy at G.,
For no one sinks the British Fleet so frequently as he.

They call him Admiral Goebbels, and they call him
Captain Punk;

Old England never *had* so many ships as he has sunk!

He bombs them over breakfast, he torpedoes them at tea;
And if a ship pops up again, why, then she counts as three.

Napoleon was a nobody, van Tromp a timid dunce,
For neither of them wished to sink the Navy more than
once;

But Admiral Gobble-Goebbel really does command the
main,

And having sunk the British Fleet, he sinks it all again.

August 11, 1940

'NO ISLANDS'

'THERE ARE no islands now,' he cried:
'I draw the teeth of wind and tide!
The cliffs of Dover soon collapse
Like other lines on other maps;
For nothing matters or remains
But my disgusting aeroplanes!'

Well, well, it's true the times are strange;
But has there been so big a change?
Drake drove a single fleet away:
We meet the Armada twice a day.
But otherwise, we shyly claim,
This island's very much the same.

August 18, 1940

MARCH OF THE FREE

(*Lines written for Sir Edward Elgar's 'Pomp and Circumstance'*
—Number 4, in G)

SOLO

FIGHT FOR Freedom, every one.

Build the ship and man the gun,

Do as you have never done

To set the peoples free.

Fill the shell and speed the plough,

Every soul's a soldier now,

Till we have seen the bully bow,

And set the peoples free.

Wake, and watch, and work, and win!

Fight, and farm, and sow, and spin!

Fall the faithful people in

To set the peoples free.

But the day the battle's won

Never say the fight is done—

We'll make the world a better one!

We, the few, the happy free,

Will fly the flags of Liberty,

Blow the horns of Liberty—

Liberty!—

Till the world is free.

REFRAIN

All men must be free.

March for Liberty with me.

Brutes and braggarts may

Have their little day—

We shall never bend the knee.

God is drawing His sword:

We are fighting for the Lord.

Sing, then, brother, sing,
Giving everything,
All you are and hope to be,
To make the peoples free.

SOLO

By the grinding wheels—
By the furnace door—
Where the mother kneels—
And where the bombers roar—
On parade or prow,
Train and plane and plough—
We sing the single vow,
To set the peoples free.
We, the free, remain,
To break the tyrant's chain,
Nor shall we sleep again
Until the world is free.
Not for wealth and birth
But all the human race
We'll make the earth
A better place!

We, the few, the happy free.